Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Health Administration Washington, DC 20420

VHA DIRECTIVE 2008-069

October 27, 2008

DECISION SUPPORT SYSTEM (DSS) OUTPATIENT IDENTIFIERS

- **1. PURPOSE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive defines the purpose and use of Decision Support System (DSS) Identifiers. *NOTE:* DSS Identifiers are also commonly known as stop codes. This Directive provides the operational set-up of DSS Identifiers by Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers.
- 2. BACKGROUND: VHA collects workload data that supports the continuity of patient care, resource allocation, performance measurement, quality management, and third-party collections. DSS Identifiers assist VA medical centers in defining workload, which is critical for costing purposes. DSS Identifiers are used to identify workload for all outpatient encounters, inpatient appointments in outpatient clinics, and inpatient billable professional services. They also serve as guides to select DSS outpatient department structures. They are the single and critical designation by which VHA defines clinical work units for costing purposes. NOTE: The Office of Information and Technology (OI&T) Veterans Health Information and Technology Architecture (VistA) Maintenance Program (VMP) issues software patches required to update the DSS Identifier files. The Chief Business Office (CBO) determines first party co-payments based on DSS Identifiers.

a. Standardization

- (1) It is essential that VA medical centers correctly use DSS Identifiers and not deviate from nationally-directed standards. DSS Identifiers:
- (a) Indicate the primary work group that is responsible for providing the specific set of clinic products; and
- (b) Serve as a stable identification method that can be used to compare costs between facilities.
- (2) Many VHA national database users actively use DSS Identifiers for workload searches to indicate the general type of work, as well as the type of production unit creating this work. Examples include:
- (a) The Monthly Program Cost Report (MPCR), which extracts the primary stop code portion of the six-character DSS Identifier for MPCR workload purposes;
 - (b) Allocation Resource Center (ARC) Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA);
 - (c) Clinical program offices;
 - (d) Health Service Research and Development (HSR&D); and

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- (e) National VHA Performance Measures.
- b. **Organization.** DSS Identifiers are organized by the following categories:

100 - 299	Ancillary and General Support Services
300 - 399	Medicine and Primary Care Services
400 - 449	Surgical Services
500 – 599	Mental Health Services
600 - 699	Various Special Programs
450 – 499 and 700 – 999	Other

c. **Definitions**

- (1) **Decision Support System (DSS).** DSS is VA's Managerial Cost Accounting System. It is a derived database that is compiled through the merging of input from diverse sources of financial and workload data. DSS is VA's only system that provides full cost data at the product level.
- (2) **DSS Identifier.** DSS Identifier is a VHA term that characterizes VHA Outpatient Clinics by a six-character descriptor. The DSS Identifier value is transmitted to the National Patient Care Database (NPCD) with each separate outpatient encounter into the NPCD field "DSS Identifier." A primary stop code and a secondary stop code comprise the DSS Identifier.
- (a) <u>Primary Stop Code</u>. The first three numbers of the DSS Identifier represent the primary stop code. The primary stop code designates the main clinical group responsible for the care. Three numbers must always be in the first three characters of a DSS Identifier for it to be valid.
- (b) <u>Secondary Stop Code</u>. The last three numbers of the DSS Identifier contain the secondary or credit stop code, which the VA medical center may use as a modifier to further define the primary work group.
- $\underline{1}$. The secondary stop code modifier may indicate the type of services provided. For example, a flu vaccination given in Primary Care is designated by 323710.
- <u>2</u>. The secondary stop code modifier may also represent the type of provider or team. For example, a Mental Health Clinic run by a social worker can be designated 502125.
- (c) <u>Credit Pair.</u> A DSS ID Credit Pair is the common term used when two DSS Identifiers, a primary code and a secondary code, are utilized when establishing a clinic in the VistA software. Some specific credit pairs are listed in the DSS Identifier References.
- **3. POLICY:** It is VHA policy that the procedures for the selection and management of the VHA DSS Identifier System applies to all field facilities. *NOTE:* DSS Identifiers are updated at a minimum on an annual basis.

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4. ACTION

- a. <u>Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director.</u> Each VISN Director is responsible for:
- (1) Appointing a VISN Coordinator to review and approve requests, from stations within the VISN, for new identifiers (see Att. A).
- (2) Ensuring each facility maintains full adherence to the current fiscal year's DSS Identifier set-up instructions for requesting new DSS Identifiers.
- b. <u>Medical Center Director</u>. Each Medical Center Director is responsible for ensuring the facility maintains full adherence to the current fiscal year's DSS Identifier set-up.
- **5. REFERENCES:** All DSS Identifier references are located on the DSS Identifiers web page (http://vaww.dss.med.va.gov/programdocs/pd_oident.asp) or on the DSS Home Page (http://vaww.dss.med.va.gov/) under the Program Documents tab.
 - a. Active DSS Identifiers. This is a short list of current codes without definitions.
- b. <u>Summary of Active Stop Codes.</u> This is a complete list of DSS Identifiers with long definitions describing each code.
- c. <u>National Alpha Numeric (4 Character) Code Descriptions.</u> These codes help to further define a clinic.
- d. <u>Highlights of DSS Identifier Changes</u>. This document provides details of changes to DSS Identifiers during the fiscal year and additional relevant information on workload collection.
- e. <u>DSS Identifiers Instructional Guide.</u> This instructional guide outlines how to use and pair primary and secondary DSS Identifiers for workload collection.
- **6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY:** The VHA Office of Finance, Decision Support Office, Database Development Section (175F), is responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions may be directed to (781) 275-9175.
- **7. RESCISSIONS:** VHA Directive 2004-053 is rescinded. This VHA Directive expires October 31, 2013.

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ATTACHMENT A

REQUESTING NEW DECISION SUPPORT SYSTEM (DSS) IDENTIFIERS

- 1. Submit a request by e-mail to the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Stop Code Council (Outlook mail link: VHA DSS Stop Code Task Force). The request will be reviewed for technical impact. Site requests should be submitted to the appropriate Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Coordinator for review. If approved by the VISN Coordinator, the request is forwarded to the VHA Stop Code Council. The following information needs to be included in the submitted request:
- a. Reason for request or recommendation. Outline what are you asking the VHA Stop Code Council to consider. It is helpful to know if this request is for a national program or if it is a site request.
- b. Business need or justification. Identify the VHA initiative or program goal that the new DSS Identifier will help you achieve.
- c. Proposed definition. Describe how the new Identifier should be described on the national list so that it is clear what type of workload will be captured.
- d. Supporting documentation. Provide the VA directive or program document that will help support your request for the new Identifier.
- 2. Sites need to annually review and verify that DSS Identifier code associations for their programs are correct.